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ABSTRACT

This document reports the proceedings of a United Nations World Assembly on Aging follow-up conference. Presented are the following: "International Exchange Center on Gerontology: The Organization and Its Mission"; "Preface" (Sheppard); "Welcoming Telegram" (Shuman); "Overview of the World Assembly on Aging" (McDonald); "The Aging World" (Oriol); "The International Action Plan on Aging" (McDonald); "The World Assembly's Action Plan on Aging" (Oriol); "United Nations Response to the World Assembly" (McDonald); "United States Response to the World Assembly" (Oriol); and "Epilogue" (Sheppard). (KC)

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INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE
CENTER ON GERONTOLOGY
at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
A Multi-University Consortium

REPORT ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE

United Nations WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGING

EDITED BY:

Halaine-Sherin Briggs

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HAROLD L. SHEPPARD
Director

Report on the
United Nations

WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGING

Based on a Follow-up Conference

December 7, 1983
Tampa, Florida

Edited by:
Halaine-Sherin Briggs

International Exchange Center on Gerontology
at the University of South Florida

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Dedicated to the Memory of Senator Frank F. Church

1924 - 1984

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International Exchange Center on Gerontology: The Organization and Its Mission

The International Exchange Center on Gerontology (IECG) is a consortium of ten public and private university centers on aging in Florida, based at the University of South Florida in Tampa. The underlying purpose of the IECG is to make available to policy makers, administrators, and practitioners the best information from domestic and international sources about effective and innovative programs for the elderly. The joint resources of the ten universities and the prominent position of Florida, with its large proportion of older persons, provide a unique opportunity for leadership in academic and policy-making activities in gerontology. As a base for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on vital policies and programs concerning the elderly, the IECG can be of service to Florida's political and administrative leadership. It is designed to be an active link between universities, state and local governments, and other organizations.

Preface

Harold L. Sheppard

The United States Congress has adopted a resolution as an official response to the World Plan for Action developed at the UN World Assembly on Aging in Vienna. In that resolution, Congress requested the President "to encourage the exchange of information among the states, the federal government, international organizations and other nations."

The International Exchange Center on Gerontology, a multi-university consortium based at the University of South Florida, is in part a mechanism for implementing this mission of information exchange. The publication herein of two major presentations at IECG's December, 1983 Conference about that UN Assembly, is one small contribution to the goal of international information exchange.

We hope the remarks by both John McDonald and William Oriol will enable the reader to acquire a broader feel and understanding about the process taking place in Vienna, and of course, about the facts, trends, and issues that culminated in the World Assembly's Action Plan on Aging.

Welcoming Telegram to the Follow-up Conference to the World Assembly on Aging

Tarek Shuman

I warmly welcome the opportunity that the International Exchange Center on Gerontology gave me to extend greetings to participants of this international conference and to present to you a summary of activities undertaken since the conclusion of the World Assembly on Aging.

The Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging, which was unanimously adopted by 157 member states of the United Nations, emphasized that its success would depend largely on action taken by governments at national levels. Consequently, the General Assembly called upon governments to make continued efforts to implement principles and recommendations contained in the Plan of Action in accordance with their national structures, needs and objectives.

Responses to this call have been overwhelmingly positive. Most countries have continued their national committees on aging to work actively to promote implementation of the plan. Some national committees indeed indicated that they would not only continue to exist, but would be upgraded to national councils on aging. A number of countries have held national conferences to analyze the recommendations of the Plan of Action and their applicability to national situations. As a result, national priority plans of action have been formulated and target areas for development have been established.

Encouraged by world-wide awareness generated by the World Assembly, numerous national professional societies and organizations have organized national seminars, workshops and conferences to discuss the question of aging within the context of their particular specialties. Your conference is an illustrative example of such an initiative.

The United Nations, on its part, is strengthening its program for international cooperation. Specifically, it is developing its international network on aging in order to encourage the exchange of knowledge, skills and experiences. The provision of technical cooperative activities in collaboration with the United Nations specialized agencies is being intensified. Research and data collection, as well as collaboration with non-governmental organizations, are also important components of the program.

One important instrument which is helping to maintain the momentum of the World Assembly is the Trust Fund for Aging. Requests for assistance for over two million dollars were received by the United Nations during the first half of 1983. Some 53 projects in a variety of areas from all parts of the world have either been approved or are under active review. It has been particularly significant to note that contributions to the Trust Fund have been made by a number of developing countries in addition to those from the developed world. The Trust Fund is playing a dynamic role in encouraging the implementation of the Plan of Action. By providing seed money for innovative projects, the Fund is a catalyst for action and for strengthening self-reliance at the national level.

I wish to thank you on behalf of the United Nations for your keen concern with this very important question and I am confident that your deliberations, conclusions and recommendations will be of great benefit to all of us.

Overview of the World Assembly on Aging

John W. McDonald, Jr.

The World Assembly on Aging was what I consider the most exciting, the most substantive, and certainly the most far-reaching international event that has taken place thus far in the field of aging. The World Assembly on Aging, which took place in Vienna, Austria in August of 1982, was the first time in history that nations at the governmental level had assembled on a global basis to discuss the subject of aging.

The question often arises of why and how the United Nations became involved in the subject of aging and perhaps the following data will put this into perspective. In 1950, there were approximately 200 million people in the world over the age of 60, which is the United Nations definition of aging. Just twenty years later in 1970, this figure had increased to 300 million people in the world over 60. By the year 2000, this 300 million figure will double to 600 million people. And projecting a bit further to the year 2025, this population will almost double again to in excess of one billion, one hundred million people. In only 42 years, the world will have that many people over the age of 60. The point to remember about the 2025 figure is that these people are already alive, they have survived birth and childhood diseases. The world as a whole and each individual nation today is developing a much larger, older population. We found in our preparations for the World Assembly that the world is graying and does not realize this. One of the main thrusts of the Conference was to bring this to the world's attention.

It is a major achievement of the human race to have people who fully expect to reach old age. For the first time, people are living longer and as such can have a major impact on their lives and on the countries in which they live. We must also realize that the impact of this aging population on every society is going to be a major one, economically, politically, and culturally, in the years ahead and for these reasons the United Nations became involved in the aging issue.

Planning a World Conference

The first speech in the United Nations on the problem of the aging was made to the General Assembly in 1969 by a distinguished ambassador from the Island of Malta, Ambassador Pardo. I was privileged to hear that speech and was most impressed by his projections. Unfortunately, most

in the audience were unimpressed. The governments of the world and the United Nations had other over-riding concerns and the subject of aging fell dormant for some time.

The next step, interestingly enough, was taken by the United States Congress in 1977. The U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, under the leadership of Senator Frank Church and Representative Claude Pepper, unanimously passed resolutions requesting the executive branch to encourage the United Nations to hold a world conference on aging. In 1978, we, in the State Department, were successful in having a United Nations resolution unanimously passed in which 158 nations agreed to hold a world conference on the elderly in August, 1982.

In April 1980, the UN Secretariat came forward with organizational proposals which set up a 23 nation advisory committee and a small in-house secretariat. With considerable effort on the part of the United States, we were able to have Mr. William Kerrigan appointed Secretary General for the Conference. He is the first American to hold such a post in the United Nations history and provided excellent leadership for the Conference. I mention this specifically because it was an important asset to the United States to have such leadership within the Secretariat and ultimately enhanced the success of the Conference. In order to show that the United States was supportive of the Conference, the United States made two financial contributions toward preparations for the Conference totalling over $650,000.

It was during this preparatory stage in 1980 that the General Assembly passed a resolution changing the title of the meeting from a World Assembly on the Elderly, to a World Assembly on Aging. The very significant difference between the two words was globally recognized.

If I can digress for just a moment to try to put this World Assembly on Aging into a broader development perspective; the United Nations meets three months out of every year and has some 250 different agenda items covering every subject imaginable, which are discussed in various committees. A number of people felt the UN should place more emphasis on individual subjects, particularly in the development field, many of which deal with social as well as economic affairs. So it was decided to take a new approach and in 1972, the first single agenda-item world conference was held in Stockholm on the subject of the environment. Not only was this a landmark meeting, but it also provided a model for the fifteen world conferences held since 1972. The model of a two-week, single agenda-item, global conference has been used to focus attention on such issues as: food (1974), population (1974), women (1975 and 1980), employment and basic needs (1976), drinking water (1977), deserts (1977), technical cooperation among developing countries (1978), science and technology

(1979), energy (1981), and aging (1982). These approaches have been most effective and the World Assembly on Aging is no exception to this because of the attention it focused on aging.

Global Planning Meetings

In preparing for a conference of this magnitude, it was necessary to determine what the desired outcomes of the Conference were and how these could be attained. I believe it is fair to say that a critical goal of these global meetings is to ensure that political will or political interest is stimulated at the national level on that particular subject. This meant interesting and involving the policy makers, the development planners, and the people who make change or are instruments of change in their own national governments. This Conference tried to bring policy makers together to educate them about the world's concerns on aging. The goal was to stimulate them sufficiently so when they returned home they would initiate the type of action which is necessary to achieve longterm goals.

We had two main problems that had to be overcome before we could consider this a successful conference. In the preparatory meetings around the world, we found that most developing countries believed that the problems of the aging were not their problems. The developing nations felt that the problems of the aging were our problems, i.e., the problems of the West, of the developed world, and initially discounted the need for concern over older citizens in their own countries. However, the facts were very different from what the developing countries had expected, even though this myth of non-action and non-involvement still continues. The United Nations estimated that in the year 1970, 50 percent, half of the people over age 60 in the world, were in developing countries. It also projected that by the year 2000, two-thirds of the people over 60 will be living in developing countries – in the poor countries of the world. This projection surprised the people in the West as well as those in the Third World. This data was used to demonstrate the urgent need to begin planning for these problems.

Another concern that exists in each of these global meetings is "the north-south dialogue" or interaction. The north is the developed world and the south, the poor or developing countries. At many meetings of the United Nations there is a major battle for resource transfers from the north to the south, from the rich to the poorer countries, in an effort to solve problems. There was concern that this might become a major issue at the Assembly. We felt if these two issues were resolved, the Conference would be very successful.

Since advance planning is critical to the success of such a conference, we were fortunate to have a solid Secretariat who worked most

assiduously in the preparatory phase. As a result, the fifteen preparatory meetings held for this Conference far exceeded the preparations of previous global conferences. There were seven regional technical meetings, primarily of experts, held in different regions of the world. One was held in Washington, D.C., during June, 1981 for Canada and the United States and brought together some 200 experts in the field of aging. A national, non-governmental strategy evolved at this particular meeting. This was replicated in six other geographical regions around the world. These meetings were very important because they brought to the attention of politicians for the first time in many countries, the forthcoming Conference.

The reports which issued from these seven meetings were presented at the governmental meetings held in each of the five geographical regions of the world (Asia, Africa, Latin America, Western Europe and Eastern Europe). The representatives in these five meetings worked on what later became known as the Draft Plan of Action. This was a single document the Secretariat would prepare and present to the World Assembly on Aging for governmental consideration and approval. There were also three meetings of the Advisory Committee which included 23 nations. This group also worked on the Draft Plan of Action.

Asian Regional Meeting

As a participant in a number of the preparatory sessions, I found there were clear trends evolving in various regions of the world. The first regional meeting was in Manila in October, 1981. A great deal of interest was generated by this meeting since there were two of the most populous nations in the world in attendance. The Chinese were a major delegation and were most concerned about their older population. The Soviet Union also attended and sent a cabinet level minister to represent them at the Manila meeting. A number of other countries were involved as well.

Generally, the level of governmental concern was related to the size of a country's aging population. In most of the developing world, the aging population represents 5 percent of the total population, but there are some interesting exceptions. For example, Hong Kong, Singapore and Trinidad have between 11 and 12 percent of their population over age 60. In most developed countries, 15 percent of the population is over 60, which is the case in the United States, but there are some interesting exceptions to this as well. Today, Great Britain, Germany, Austria and France have 20 percent of their population 60 years of age and older.

In the Asian meeting, the policy planners initially focused not on aging but on the problems associated with youth and youth unemployment. Eventually many recognized that the talents of their aging population were

being lost to them in this development process. One of the findings of this meeting was that if this vital resource could be channelled more effectively, then policy makers would be more interested in their aging populations.

Collectively, because of the information presented at the Manila meeting, we began to realize that in most developing countries 80 percent of the population continues to live on farms and in the rural areas. This means there is no social security system for this 80 percent. Since there is no income support mechanism in place, people live or die based on what is produced on the land.

As discussions continued, it became apparent that policy planners in many countries were depending upon the village structure to care for their older citizens. As country after country told the same story, it became clear that the village mechanism is breaking down in many of the developing countries. This has occurred because of the migration from the farm to the city, from rural areas to urban areas, and those who are left behind are the very young and the very old. In some villages, which were presented as examples, farm productivity has declined because of the massive migration.

Two trends emerged from the meeting in the Philippines on which all member countries agreed. First, each Asian nation stated that the institutionalization of the aging in their country should be a last resort – an absolutely last resort. Asian countries are willing to try any alternative before considering the institutionalization of their older citizens. The second trend was a recognition that the family must be the basic resource for the care of the aging and must be strengthened through the development of more external services from either governmental or non-governmental organizations. The development of incentives was recommended as a mechanism for strengthening the family and to strengthen the commitment to the land.

Latin American Regional Meeting

The second regional meeting I attended was in Costa Rica and had all of the Latin American countries present. The Latin Americans, too, were concerned about how to care for their aging. Interestingly, at least three nations spoke on the potentially difficult north-south issue of resource flows. And seemingly their remarks were directed at me when they said, "We do not want financial handouts from the North. We are not concerned about money in that sense of the word. We know that this is an internal problem. We have to follow our own policies but we have to reshape our policies. This is not a matter of resource transfer."

Latin Americans were concerned about many of the same issues as

their Asian colleagues. The family must be strengthened and institutionalization was not an answer to the problems of the aging in Latin America. They went further when the Latin Americans stated that the aging in their countries should actively participate in the formulation of policies affecting older citizens. I think this is something that we in the United States could learn more about.

The Latin Americans wanted to increase the active involvement of what we call the non-governmental organizations who are involved in providing services. Again, this is a very important statement because the non-governmental organization concept, which is basically American, is beginning to appeal to other countries and in particular to Latin America. Latin Americans expressed the need for more adult education. They wanted to retrain their farmers – their aging farmers – to put them back on the land as more effective, efficient farmers. Again, an innovative trend which I think should be encouraged.

The most surprising action of the meeting was the Latin American's unanimous recommendation to remove all age restrictions on employment. Even though these are countries who have young populations, they recognized that there should be a removal of age restrictions on employment so a person could work as long as he/she wished and was able to remain in the workforce.

The final Latin American recommedation was that the UN definition of aging be redefined. The phrase "60 years of age and older" is one that is used all the time and to me it is a meaningless phrase since it only addresses the issue of chronological age. I think that we must develop a more sophisticated definition, particularly in terms of health care delivery systems.

African Regional Meeting

In Africa, representatives from some thirty countries including five ministers of state met in Addis Ababa, which is the United Nations regional headquarters in Africa. We were pleased to find this large number of countries represented and their report meshed well with those from Latin America and Asia. The Africans, too, said that the segregation of aging into institutions "should be avoided and only used as a last resort." As a result of this posture, the Africans were very supportive of the family system. They indicated that, "the family system should be strengthened in ways that insure the dignity, the quality of life and the security of its aging members."

They stressed what had not been stressed before – inter-generational relationships, particularly at the village level. The Africans felt this was an important resource to be built on which had not been done previously.

They also asked for more education and training. I think it is unusual to have three major regions of the world, Africa, Asia and Latin America, come out in almost identical fashion on these two basic issues.

European Regional Meeting

The European meeting consisted of Eastern Europeans and Western Europeans with very high level delegations present from Eastern Europe. This group also recognized the importance of the family and stated that there had to be alternatives to institutionalization. It was also recommended here that age discrimination in employment should be abolished which they picked up from the Latin American meeting and put forward as one of their recommendations.

The Europeans indicated that no reliable data exist to prove that a lower pensionable age would provide more jobs for younger people. They also recommended that there should be major action to remove or to amend the stereotype that is so prevalent in many circles including some in the United States which say, "if you are old, you are poor and if you are disabled and old, you are a burden on society." I am sorry to say that this is a myth which exists in many parts of the world including the United States. I agree that much more has to be done to try to change that particular image.

My image of Sweden, Denmark, Norway – the Scandinavian countries – was that they had all the answers to questions on aging and we could learn everything from them. Scandinavian countries do not look upon themselves in the same fashion. In fact, in numerous speeches the Scandinavians expressed the opinion that they do not have the answers to providing care for the elderly. These countries can no longer cope with the expense burden and were seeking solutions to these problems at the World Assembly.

World Perception of the U.S.

How is the United States perceived in its care of the aging? The view many countries have of the United States is far from positive. We are seen as a very cold-hearted people when it comes to concern for our older population. The United States is viewed as ignoring the family structure, forcing people into institutions and then, abandoning them. This was the view held in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Regardless of its veracity, this is the image the United States has projected to the world.

The delegates of other countries were surprised and impressed when I pointed out that 80 percent of our aging population lived with or near their families and only 5 percent were institutionalized. After this response

I was questioned further by a very distinguished member of the Indian delegation who asked, "Well, if this is the case, why is the nursing home industry in the United States the third largest growing industry in the country?" Unfortunately, I was unable to effectively respond.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Another unique aspect of the World Assembly was the involvement of non-governmental organizations. Historically, at the single agenda-item meetings, a number of private citizens who represent various organizations would attend the conference. These representatives would become totally frustrated with their inability to interact with their delegations and therefore have no opportunity for input into the policies of their governments. This was a very frustrating experience for them. Things were done differently at this meeting. First, the non-governmental organizations organized and held their own conference four or five months prior to the meeting in Vienna. At their conference the NGO's developed their own Plan of Action which was later made available to the third Advisory Committee meeting and to the Secretariat. There were over 350 participants from 159 organizations representing 43 countries, which is a very large cross-section, in attendance.

Many of their ideas and some of their language was actually incorporated into the final document. This outreach ultimately "paid-off" at the Conference, because the non-governmental organizations who were present were most supportive; they were part of the process and there was not the same controversy which had existed at previous conferences. In fact, this model is so solid, I recommend its use at future world-wide conferences.

Vienna, August 1982

The World Assembly on Aging was held in Vienna in a very dramatic setting at the Hofburg Palace. The Plenary Session was held in the enormous ballroom. The entire setting provided an exquisite backdrop for the events of the Assembly. The Conference had in attendance 2,000 delegates from 125 countries and was opened by the President of Austria with formal messages from the Pope, the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. In the Plenary, 132 speeches were presented in a ten-day period.

International Action Plan on Aging

The Main Committee was chaired by Dr. de Bono from Malta. He did a brilliant job and was a very firm chairman. In a two week period we handled over 200 written amendments to the text the Secretariat had

prepared and presented to us. In these amendments, each of which was positive, the delegates attempted to make the original recommendations more detailed, operative and effective. When the Main Committee finished its task, it approved a 40 page document with 118 paragraphs which formed the International Action Plan on Aging. The Action Plan on Aging was then presented to the Plenary on the last day of the Conference and it was adopted by applause – by acclamation. None of the 125 governments present made a reservation on any of the 118 paragraphs of the text. There is no explanation of this kind of vote. This is the first time in the 38 year history of the United Nations that this has occurred. We had what we believed was a most successful meeting because the question of aging is one of the vital concerns to the entire world.

The family issue that was addressed previously in several regional meetings was reaffirmed in the International Action Plan on Aging. One recommendation says, "The family in its diverse forms and structures is a fundamental unit of society linking the generations and should be maintained, strengthened and protected in accordance with the traditions and customs of each country." This is a very important statement.

Over the years, the United Nations has had some difficulty because of Eastern European countries' lack of understanding of the role of non-governmental organizations. Thus, it has been almost impossible to formulate a document which addressed the role of NGO's. There was a major breakthrough at the World Assembly because the Action Plan's language on NGO's was the strongest of any in the history of the United Nations and will provide a base for future growth. The Action Plan states, "Governments and in particular local authorities, non-governmental organizations, individual volunteers and voluntary organizations including associations of the elderly can make a particularly significant contribution to the provision of support and care for elderly persons in the family and in the community." "Governments, non-governmental organizations and all concerned have a special responsibility to the most vulnerable among the elderly, particularly the poor of whom many are women and from rural areas."

The International Action Plan contained 62 specific recommendations dealing with nine different areas: health and nutrition, housing and environment, family, social welfare, income security and employment, education, data collection, training and research. I believe that this is a tremendously impressive document, a very solid piece of work and something that can guide governments, non-governmental organizations and private citizens for some years to come.

Conclusion

As a follow-up mechanism, we were able to establish an inter-secretariat committee made up of the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization, International Labor Organization and other specialized agencies such as UNESCO, who are also concerned about some aspects of problems of older citizens. This inter-secretariat committee will insure that the Secretariat in Vienna, which was repsonsible for preparing this Conference and in developing appropriate projects and programs, would not duplicate or overlap the existing programs. This UN inter-agency mechanism has been created and is in operation. An inter-governmental committee was designated at the governmental level to promote the implementation of the Plan.

The UN Secretariat has a Center in Vienna that is concerned with social and humanitarian affairs and is the third element concerned with the problems of aging. The fourth and last institutional element is a Trust Fund for technical assistance programs, particularly for the aging Third World countries. As of last report, there was a little less than one million dollars in the Trust Fund and of course the fund is seeking more money.

What happens next is that governments and others will utilize these resources for the greater good. Now is the time for governments, private organizations, non-governmental organizations, university research institutions and private citizens to look at these recommendations and move forward to carry them out.

The Aging World

William E. Oriol

The World Assembly on Aging took place during a politically tense period that included among other problems, a military flareup between Israel and Arab nations and a tense United States-Soviet Union relationship. Politics in the Third World could have become an impediment to the World Assembly as they have been in other United Nations meetings.

The fact that these problems did not hamper the Assembly was partially due to adroit diplomatic management of the Assembly and its planning stages. Also, the World Assembly caused nations to recognize aging as a special and unique issue. Frequently, national spokespersons observed that individuals and populations cannot escape the aging experience; it is a universal experience. It was universally accepted by these spokespersons that all nations should make good use of the time still remaining before the "Age of Aging" goes into high gear.

This point was perhaps most eloquently made by UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. He said:

> This is, in fact, one of the few occasions when an issue of global impact and importance is being faced by the international community at a relatively early stage – before it is too late. The process of aging, to the extent that it is a problem, can be faced in a positive and constructive manner if it is recognized and dealt with in time. The whole purpose and thrust of this forward-looking Assembly – its common pledge to meet the problems and make the best out of the challenges before us – is the most encouraging message we can convey to the international community.

Another useful admonition was given by the World Assembly on Aging Secretary-General William Kerrigan:

> . . . it is one thing to successfully convince governments that aging of the population will indeed cause significant, deeply felt changes in social, economic, and political institutions, but it must also include persuading them that these institutional abstractions really mean human beings.

Mr. Kerrigan's concern was well-founded. The Assembly, in many ways,

was a clearinghouse for abstractions, and it became necessary to conscientiously search for the individual concerns and experiences upon which these abstract issues were based.

The most abstract concepts which were presented at the Assembly were the numbers which were used to describe the aging world. One of the most significant findings at the Assembly is that there will be 1.1 billion people 60 years and older in the world by the year 2025. Currently, many in the United States have difficulty envisioning that there are currently 26.6 million Americans who are 65 years old or older. It is difficult to envison more than 1 billion persons age 60 and older.*

- One person in every seven will be 60 and older in 2025, compared to only one in twelve in 1950. This will raise the proportion of aging from 8.5 to 13.7 percent of the world's population.
- In 2025, 72 percent of the 1.1 billion 60-plus population will live in developing nations. In 1982, approximately half of the 60-plus population lived in developing nations.
- Urbanization of the elderly will increase markedly. In 1975, approximately 66 percent of the developed nations' elderly lived in urban areas; by 2000 the proportion of urban elderly will increase to 75 percent. In the developing countries, urban elderly will increase from 27 percent to 44 percent. A substantial proportion of this urbanization will be in "mega-cities" such as Mexico City and Saõ Paulo which are expected to have 31 and 26 million inhabitants, respectively, by the year 2000.
- Global regions will differ significantly in 2025 in their proportions of the 60 and older population: Africa, 6.6 percent; Latin America, 10.8 percent; North America, 22.3 percent; East Asia, 19.6; South Asia, 10.9 percent; Europe, 24.7 percent; and, Oceania, 17.8 percent.
- China, which had 73.7 million persons over 60 in 1975, will have an estimated 284 million aged by 2025. Other nations with substantial 60-plus populations in 2025 include: India, 146 million; U.S.S.R., 71 million; United States, 67 million; and Japan, 33 million.
- The fast growing 80-plus category is generally recognized as the

*The United Nations describes "aging" as a term that canbe used to define those sections of the population who have left the middle years of life behind them; the word encompasses several stages of the lifespan and a vast range of differences."

most at-risk group in terms of health care needs. Countries with significant 80 and older populations are: China, 25.7 million; India, 10.5 million; U.S.S.R., 10 million; United States, 7.6 million; Japan, 5.8 million; and Brazil, 3.4 million.

- Age dependency ratios which show the relationship of the total population of the young group age 0-14 and the 60-plus group, will vary considerably among the global regions. Africa will have a marked decrease in the 0-14 age group which will offset the increase in 60-plus group and leave the present age dependency ratio fairly intact. However, in Western Europe the age dependency ratio will rise significantly.

Much analysis has been given, but much more still must be, to the statistics presented at the Assembly and to the issues they represent. For example, what about the quality of life among elders in the crowded urban areas of the future? One of the UN World Assembly on Aging publications which addresses this issue was the introductory document on developmental issues (A/CONF.113/5), written by the French demographer, Paul Paillat. He raised many striking points, including his belief that rapid economic development, particularly in urban areas, can lead to the "marginalization" of the elderly in terms of lost roles and prestige. Paillat said: "There are many similarities between the miserable lot of aging workers during the first hundred years of industrialization and what is now being observed in places where the same process is just beginning."

Another pertinent book is *Aging 2000 – A Challenge for Society,* by Philip Selby, Mal Schechter, et. al. (1982). This work is based upon a concensus of opinion from experts on aging from 16 nations who responded to a survey by the Sandoz Institute regarding the to problems of the elderly. It concluded that:

> In many countries, no coherent approach is evident to resolving many fundamental problems by the year 2000. By and large, problems seen today will worsen for the elderly. Notably, trends toward earlier retirement are seen as intensifying in many countries, and income-maintenance programs will be hard pressed to provide for more years in retirement.

One reason to hope that such a pessimistic view of the future will not prevail is simply because there was a World Assembly on Aging, and there will be follow-up to it. This follow-up will be discussed later. One clear accomplishment of the Assembly was to provide a descriptive summation of how the age of aging appeared in 1982 and what was expected to transpire in the next 25 to 50 years. We are not in a position to ask how well has the world done in heeding the warnings issued in

Vienna; and how well do we understand a world with 1.1 billion aged.

Each of the following was extracted from a national report which was submitted at the Assembly *(Aging in All Nations: A Special Report on the World Assembly on Aging, Vienna, Austria July 26-August 6, 1982.)* They capture both some of the universals and some of the differences in aging around the world.

United Republic of Cameroon: One out of two residents in this West African state is under 20 years of age, but respect for the elderly and the family is said to be strong: "The elderly have always been the symbol of wisdom, and, when an elderly person dies, it is thought of as the disappearance of a whole library."

Soviet Union: Its national report states that no one can be fired or refused a job just because he or she has reached the retirement age which is age 55 for women and 60 for men. Research has shown that almost 80 percent of the workers who have reached retirement age are fully able to work. Soviet policy makers are offering inducements to workers who continue working "to satisfy their desire to work and be useful to society."

Brazil: Declared 1982 the National Year of the Aging, and formed a National Commission from among governmental and non-governmental organizations. (Additionally, 41 other nations have established national bodies dedicated to the World Assembly and its follow-up.)

China: It was represented by a 70 year old delegation chairman who indicated that most old people in China live with their children and grandchildren. China, with 80 percent population in the rural areas, has had far less migration from rural to urban areas than many other developing nations because it has imposed strict controls on such relocation.

Iceland: Has introduced legislation "to secure the elderly the social services and the health care they need and to ensure that these will be made available in the form demanded by the elderly's condition."

Iraq: "Nine homes for the aged exist in the country, which provide leisure facilities, as well as mosques."

Mali: "Due to the severe climate and living conditions in Mali (in northwestern Africa) the aged are those over 50 years of age."

Philippines: The Asian tradition of close familial ties and high esteem for the elderly is greatly valued in the Philippines. And yet, during preparations for the regional UN World Assembly on Aging meeting held in Manila during October 1981, the government conducted a series of consultative dialogues on the elderly and found: "expressed feelings of loneliness, helplessness and worthlessness coupled with feelings of rejection and

neglect by their families." Strained relationships between the elderly and family members was also an identified problem.

Sri Lanka: In 1982, Sri Lanka had almost 12 percent more elderly men than women.

Kenya: In 1982, Kenya had one million people age 60 or older and projects a steady increase in this number. One matter of government concern is that "Due to modern changes, the traditional family commitment of caring for the aged is slowly dying." Another issue of concern is squatter-slum proliferation.

As I listened to many of these speeches I was reminded of a hearing I attended as a staff person for the Senate Committee on Aging. We had worked for sometime to persuade the director of a powerful federal agency to explain to the Committee why a planning document gave little consideration to older Americans. When the director read his statement, it was clear that he had not previously read it. He seemed to grow more interested in it as he pressed on. Finally, he stopped and looked at the sentence he had just read and remarked, "I didn't know that!" I think that many of the speakers at the World Assembly had similar experiences as they read their prepared texts.

The International Action Plan on Aging

John W. McDonald, Jr.

The question that one is faced with in trying to organize such a global gathering is what can you accomplish with 2,000 delegates in a two-week period? The secret to that is advance preparation on all fronts much of which depends on the selection of somewhat apolitical people who have the relevant substantive knowledge to fill the various leadership roles. There were fifteen pre-conference gatherings. These were critical to the success of the Conference because the delegates from the specific regions of the world were able to interact on the subject of aging before they attempted to discuss the draft document in a two-week period.

The one short, forty page document which was finalized at the World Assembly evolved out of five or six feet of different documents submitted from all parts of the world. So, it is critical that a conference has an international Secretariat who is skilled in synthesizing information for consideration by the delegates. This Secretariat was headed by an American and this was very important to the success of the Conference.

Conference Leadership

Governments interacted at the 23 nation International Advisory Committee meeting which held three sessions prior to the World Assembly. The matter of who would chair these meetings was most important because it was here that plans for the Conference were formalized and accepted by governments. We were fortunate and wise in the selection of Dr. Anthony H.B. de Bono of Malta to chair the International Advisory Committee meeting. However, the action that ensured the success of the Conference was its deviation from the rules of procedure associated with global meetings, which permitted Dr. de Bono to be elected chairman of the Main Committee. Let me explain. In global meetings of this size, each of the five regional groups (Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and North America) has a post as one of the officers of the conference. The President, three Vice-Presidents and Raporteur are the five posts. Since the Conference was in Vienna, Austria, the President of the Conference was to be an Austrian. Structurally, it was important to have de Bono chair the Main Committee since this was where the precedence-setting decisions would be made. This meant two seats would have to be allocated to Western Europe and that had

never been done before. It took three or four months to achieve this politically, and through an amendment to the rules of procedure, a sixth position was established which allowed an Austrian President and de Bono, a Maltese, to chair the Main Committee.

United States Delegation

Since the United States Congress had been responsible for the initial proposal of an international aging meeting, it was important to include both the Congress and the Executive Branch in the preparatory process. Therefore, we expended considerable effort structuring a model that would be effective. Thus, a Federal Inter-Agency Committee was established 18 months prior to the Conference. At that time I invited Congressional representatives to sit as full members of this committee. They welcomed the opportunity to be part of the process as we moved toward the finalization of the plans for the World Assembly on Aging.

A non-governmental committee was also established. Representatives from the National Council on Aging and 40 other groups were asked to represent a cross-section of American private sector interests in aging on this non-governmental organization committee. They were delighted to do so and I met with them regularly thereafter. Drafts of all the position papers were made available to the NGO representatives to enable them to review and respond to the positions proposed by the United States government. The NGO representatives were generous with their time and it was through their time and involvement that the United States had a very cohesive presence at the Assembly in Vienna.

The United States had a very solid delegation. There were 500 applicants for the delegation from which the 30 members of the final delegation were selected. Secretary Schweiker of Health and Human Services headed the delegation and delivered the United States speech. Since we had obtained his commitment to serve as head of the delegation six months prior to the Conference, it demonstrated to other countries that the United States, which was instrumental in calling the Conference, was taking the event very seriously. This was one of the factors which ensured that other countries sent ministers as heads of their delegations, or as in the case of the Soviet Union, a vice premier.

Claude Pepper was a member of the delegation as were Robert Butler and Cyril Brickfield of the American Association of Retired Persons. It was a solid professional group of people, with whom it was a pleasure to work. We brought with us a message from President Reagan, which was one of the three special messages that were presented to the delegations. We felt this was indicative of the interest which was present at all levels. When a U.S. delegation of this type is assembled, briefing papers are

developed to prepare the delegates. We prepared 100 different position papers – fifty attempted to anticipate political problems that might arise – the remaining fifty responded to the substance of the Conference.

Negotiations at the Assembly

The first task of our delegation was to reach an agreement within the Western group that certain posts within the conference structure were to be allocated to specific countries. We went into the preliminary meetings believing that each of the five regional groups would place in consideration a specific number of candidates for the position of vice president as opposed to that of senior vice president. When the Conference started, the opening speech was made by the President of Austria and the President of the Conference was formally elected. The Conference then went on to the election of the vice presidents at which time an African delegate took exception to the African slate in the Plenary Session. The pandemonium which ensued caused an adjournment that enabled us to negotiate with the African delegate. When the Conference reconvened, he withdrew his objection and we were able to proceed with the election of Dr. de Bono of Malta as Chairman of the Conference's Main Committee.

Dr. de Bono was a most effective leader, guiding the Main Committee through a monumental task of making decisions on each of the 200 amendments to the Action Plan on Aging.

Since Africa has many of the world's poorest countries, one of the ways in which adequate African representation was insured was for the United States, France, Britain and Germany, through the United Nations, to provide travel funds for two delegates from each of the 34 least developed countries in the world. Since delegates from the least developed nations could not afford to travel to Vienna and stay for over two weeks, funds were provided for this purpose through the United Nations. I think it was critical to have this because these countries represent a part of the world that we are certainly concerned about from a developmental standpoint.

International Action Plan on Aging

United Nations rules require that the results of a global conference, as the World Assembly, be confirmed by the UN General Assembly later that year. During the follow-up at the General Assembly in November/ December 1982, the United States had a small problem that I look back upon and find amusing although it was not at the time. At the end of the discussion, in the Third Committee (Social) of the General Assembly, the resolution that had been so carefully negotiated, was ready for adoption. This resolution had, as a financial cost for implementation, the enormous figure of $99,000. Since the United States pays 25 percent of

the total United Nations budget, the U.S. was going to have to pay $25,000 as our contribution to the resolution.

For one reason or another, I received last minute instructions to vote against the resolution because of the $25,000-item in the budget. The United States was taking a hard line on budgets and was only voting for resolutions calling for zero program growth and this resolution had $25,000 associated with it. As a result, when we voted, it was 148 to 1. Here was the United States, who had spent significant amounts of time and money to facilitate a global conference on aging voting "NO!" Not an abstention, but "NO!" The delightful part of the story is that, with a great deal of assistance, I was able to turn that decision around and two weeks later on December 3, 1982, we voted with the rest of the world in the unanimous support of the International Action Plan on Aging.

Plan's Recommendations

Earlier I pointed out that a number of developing countries as well as Western European and Eastern European countries had recommended that age, as a qualification for employment be eliminated. However, this recommendation was not included in the Action Plan. This item was removed through a joint filibuster on the part of the Soviets and the Japanese. In order to move forward, we had to eliminate the item on age as a qualification for employment even though it was recommended at the European meeting, by a number of countries in the Third World and is United States policy.

The Chinese delegation sat behind the United States delegation and this enabled me to learn that the Chinese have, in their Constitution, the requirement that younger persons are mandated to support their elders. In the committee session, the Chinese delegation proposed that this section of their law be adopted by the Conference. You can imagine the consternation this caused among many delegations. Although I attempted to negotiate this issue with them, the Chinese became increasingly adamant on the subject; however, I did make several proposals which they considered. Later the Chinese agreed to the compromise language which said that it was a good idea but not mandatory that younger persons care for their elders.

We had very good relations with non-governmental organizations. It was a flexible dialogue and we made ourselves available to discuss the issues with them. In fact, we briefed the NGO's repeatedly throughout the conference so there would be understanding of the philosophy we held.

On one occasion, the President of the International Nurses Association indicated that there were no references to nurses in the proposed

document, which I had not realized until that point. She proposed the insertion of the word "nurses" in several key items. This was eventually approved. It was this type of interaction that made the whole thing worthwhile.

Third World Activities

I would like to present some examples of what the third world countries are doing. When I was in Costa Rica, I learned that this is a country that has no army; however, they do have mandatory volunteer service to the country. When a person becomes 18 years of age, each is required to give 300 hours of service to Costa Rica. Some enterprising people decided that this system could be structured to help the older citizens of Costa Rica. A program was designed in which 100 young people are put through 300 hours of lecture, training and actual interaction at the village or community level with older citizens. The sole criteria for selection is that these young people dislike older people. At the end of this period, there seems to have been a unanimous conversion with respect to the young people's feelings about older people. It was also a positive, outgoing, and supportive experience for the older citizens. This is a lesson we can learn. I suggest, for example, that the University of South Florida might establish a three credit hour course to give the same opportunity to young people here. Young students can then begin to interact on an inter-generational basis and receive college credit for this type of course.

I saw my first day care center for the aging in Costa Rica. For $4 a day the center was able to pick up about 80 or 90 older persons in a rather dilapidated bus and bring them to a very nice place. The average age of the group was 83 and they were interested in learning reading, writing, or handicrafts. The Center provided these older people the opportunity to learn and the opportunity to sit and talk with each other. They were fed lunch at the Center and then in the late afternoon, were brought back home. A very effective operation.

Tanzania, one of the poorer developing countries in Africa, is known as a fairly socialist-oriented country. At the World Assembly, the Tanzanian Minister for Health indicated that his country has been thinking, quite honestly, only about the young people. He said, "When I learned, about six months ago, that this Conference was taking place, I did have a survey run and found out that we had 800,000 in Tanzania who are 60 years of age and older. I thought, that is quite a few people, maybe I should take a look at what is going on there. What I found out was that ever since independence 20 years before, by inadvertance perhaps, we had been pushing older people out of government, out of universities, out of jobs, just dropping them and forgetting about them. I realized that we

had a tremendous national talent resource here that we as a poor country could not afford to ignore."

The Minister then assembled 60 retired Tanzanian citizens who had been retired from 5 to 15 years, many of whom were among the best educated people in the country, for a seminar. This group was asked to help Tanzania solve some of its most pressing problems. The proposals made by this group were of such a quality that the Minister of Health recommended to the President that this 60 person group become an advisory committee to the President. This group of older citizens has now become instrumental in addressing the problems of older Tanzanians – as an integral part of the governmental process. This is a very exciting concept and is in place and working in a Third World country.

The World Assembly Action Plan on Aging

William E. Oriol

The World Assembly International Action Plan on Aging (IAPA) was readily adopted by the Assembly and then later by the United Nations. There is a great deal to consider in the IAPA. One satisfaction the people of the United States and Canada can take is that a great many of the IAPA recommendations are very similar to the recommendations adopted in the North American Regional meeting in 1981.

The IAPA notes, for example, that social security systems based on accrued retirement benefits are sometimes presented in terms of gradual freezing of the large share of the national wealth for so-called nonproductive purposes. The IAPA takes a different view:

> It will probably be recognized that the accumulation of retirement funds could constitute a stablizing factor in the national economy in the sense of providing for long-term care and conservatively utilized sources of funding on a substantial scale. Similarly, most pension payments from retirement funds represent deferred earnings by the individual retiree.

The International Action Plan is emphatic on the matter of older workers making way for younger persons in tight job markets:

> Whatever the apparent wisdom of lowering retirement age levels in order to open up employment opportunities for the young, such action can hardly be seen as anything but a short-term and partial solution of one social problem through the creation of another, probably a longer-lasting one. More innovative action should be considered at both extremes of the labor force structure.

Major attention is given in specific recommendations of the International Action Plan on Aging to health care, "which should go beyond disease orientation and should involve total well-being, taking into account the interdependence of the physical, mental, social, spiritual, and environmental factors." The IAPA also asks for greater attention to preventive health practices, training for care-givers, including family members and "the proper balance between the role of institutions and that of the family in providing health care for the elderly."

Based on previous works by the World Health Organization, the IAPA also registered a complaint about old age as the age of no consent:

> Decisions affecting aging citizens are frequently made without the

> participation of the citizens themselves. This applies particularly to those who are very old, frail, or disabled. Such people should be served by flexible systems of care to give them a choice as to the type of amenities and the kind of care they receive.

Home care received a great deal of support and was seen as an important link among key elements in the health care delivery system. Housing also received similar attention. Housing recommendations are very similar to those expressed at the North American Regional Technical meeting. Housing is viewed as more than shelter, having psychological and social significance.

A great deal of attention was given to the family. An increase in the number of four and five generation families was seen as the causation of stress among adult daughters, who have become caught between the desire and the need to work and be productive and the responsibility of caring for elderly parents and grandparents.

As was the case at the 1981 U.S. White House Conference on Aging, there was also a great deal of recognition at the World Assembly and in IAPA that women are the majority group in aging and face great problems unless nations and individuals make intelligent adjustments.

The examples I have provided you may give you some idea of the rich veins of thought and proposed action that may be found within its pages. Those who are associated with universities and with other training and educational organizations have good reason to be pleased with the attention given by the IAPA to research and training needs in aging. One specific section of the plan makes very emphatic statements about the need for more training of the personnel that will be needed throughout the field all over the world.

The IAPA has placed high priority on aging research when it declared:

> Research on the social, economic, and health aspects of aging should be encouraged to achieve efficient uses of resources, improvement in social and health measures, including the prevention of functional decline, age-related disabilities, illness and poverty, and coordination of the services involved in the care of the elderly. The knowledge obtained by research provides scientific backing for a sounder basis for effective societal planning as well as for improving the well-being of the aging.

The International Action Plan on Aging has a great deal to read, to consider, and to use in planning.

The United Nations Response to the World Assembly on Aging

John W. McDonald, Jr.

The World Assembly on Aging adopted its Plan of Action; this went on to the United Nations General Assembly and on December 3, 1982 it was unanimously approved. Now, in many instances, nothing happens after this point. The resolutions which have been passed by the United Nations are not binding; they have no power of law. When the delegations return home, they sometimes forget about the action they have promised to take when they supported a resolution. Thus, it becomes our responsibility and that of the United Nations to insure that those promises are not forgotten.

Establishing a Permanent Secretariat

The United Nations has established a Secretariat in Vienna, Austria. It is part of the Center for Social and Humanitarian Affairs which is also concerned about other social and developmental issues, such as women, the disabled and youth as well as the aging sector of society. There is a separate department in that Center that is concerned solely with the follow-up of the World Assembly on Aging.

Follow-up at National Levels

In this case, however, there has been a remarkable level of follow-up to the World Assembly at the national level. Many, many delegations, including the United States, returned home determined to have this conference make a difference. Such countries as Kenya, West Germany, France, Austria, Canada, Mexico – the entire Latin American region – have held national conferences as follow-up activities to the World Assembly on Aging.

I was privileged to be invited to a meeting in Paris which took place in March and April, 1983. The French had their first National Conference on Aging and modeled it after the White House Conference on Aging of 1981. In fact, the organizer for the French meeting was one of the one hundred non-American invitees who attended the White House Conference from around the world. This gentleman returned to France with a number of positive suggestions and convinced the French government it would

be useful to have such a conference. It was a useful conference, since after the meeting, President Mitterand of France appointed the first Minister for Aging in the world. Currently, no other country in the world has a minister for aging whose sole responsibilities have to do with his country's aging population.

The French conference brought together about 1500 participants from all over France for a number of very intense, detailed discussions on aging issues. There was also an international gathering which ran parallel to the French national conference, involving some 100 people from all over the world. The international gathering unanimously recommended to the French government that it take on the task of creating a new international institute for the exchange of developmental information and research on all aspects of aging. At the end of the conference, the French Minister of Aging and the Vice-Premier acknowledged this recommendation and publically announced that they would make every effort to carry out this program. So we are hopeful that the French government will involve itself in much more detail and in greater depth than they have in the past.

The Canadian government also held a national conference. A national, non-governmental organization conference was held as well in Canada, in November, 1983. I think it is fair to say, a number of governments have taken the kind of action that was recommended by the World Assembly on Aging itself.

Follow-up by the Secretariat

There has been a major effort on the part of the UN Secretariat in Vienna to produce some publications which will analyze and evaluate the data which were received at the World Assembly. There were over 70 national reports, a number of basic documents prepared specifically for the Conference and in excess of 90 ministerial level speeches on aging in specific countries. This is now being evaluated, put into more readable form and will be a major UN publication of the General Assembly in 1984.

The UN Center in Vienna also has plans to publish a second document on a major research study entitled, *Present and Potential Impact of the Aging of Populations on Select Economic and Social Institutions.* This study will look at the implications of the family, rural development, urbanization and government policy and change with regard to the aging. These two publications will make a considerable contribution to the knowledge we now have of the international scene.

The United Nations Center on Aging in Vienna plans to call together an expert group in 1984 to address the problems of standardization of definitions and research methodologies in the field of aging. It plans to bring a small group of experts in each of these fields from various countries

to determine if standardization definitions can be agreed upon which will be useful to the global research community. I think this is an excellent move.

The International Action Plan on Aging includes a recommendation that every four years there be a review of progress on implementing the recommendations of the World Assembly. Governments will be asked to submit formal reports which describe the progress in aging that has been made since the World Assembly. During the negotiation of the resolution in the General Assembly, the United States felt it was important to be more specific and useful to have a starting date. The amended resolution calls for the first review to occur in 1985 and then regularly every four years, thereafter. This was done in order to not lose the momentum that had been generated by the Conference. Many organizations have already begun to plan for the 1985 date. Plans are to discuss the 1985 Follow-up meeting in the General Assembly in the fall of 1985.

As I indicated, there was a United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat established as a result of the World Assembly. This group held a meeting in mid-1983, in which the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and other major specialized agencies of the United Nations began to develop procedures to insure that any overlap or duplication in the technical assistance programs which are planned is eliminated.

A meeting of the Inter-Governmental (Social) Commission which consists of 36 nations, was held in early 1983 which reviewed the Action Plan and the terms of the Trust Fund. This Social Commission, which is a mechanism of governments, then announced a rededication of the Program of Action. Thus, the various instruments that were created by the World Assembly are in operation.

Establishing a Trust Fund

The most important institution and the most difficult to achieve was the Trust Fund for the World Assembly on Aging. This mechanism was originally set up to provide financial assistance to Third World nations to insure their attendance at the Assembly. The Trust Fund also provided the funds for the documentation research done in preparation for the Conference and for the staff costs associated with it. The United States felt very strongly that a continuing financial support mechanism was necessary, albeit modest one, which could grow as countries became better able to make financial contributions. Thus, we proposed that the Trust Fund for the World Assembly be converted to a standing, permanent trust fund for the aging. This was finally achieved at the 1982 UN General Assembly. We now have the four designated mechanisms in place.

Although the United States has not made any additional contributions to this fund, additional amounts of money have been received from other countries.

The Secretariat in Vienna has not been idle and has already agreed to fund a number of specific technical assistance projects. The sums of money are modest, varying in amounts from $10,000 to $50,000 each in an attempt to make the small sum of money available go as far as possible. Thus the programs funded are for small technical assistance projects rather than for capital infra-structure costs.

Some of these projects include, for example, one to the Congo for a project to develop national policies and programs on aging. As I indicated earlier, a number of countries have very modest beginnings in this field, so this will be an effort to send out one or two experts to work with the government, i.e., the ministries of labor, development and finance, to determine what the current legislative situation is and what rules and regulations might be created to aid the older citizens in the Congo.

In Ghana, a project to evaluate the state of research with regard to older Ghanian citizens has been approved. Once these levels are established and an information base created, it will be most helpful to future research in Ghana.

In Malawi, a project has been funded to analyze the impact of aging on the population in one rural sector of the country and in Mali, there will be a fact-finding mission on the elderly in rural areas. The Secretariat in Vienna also plans to sponsor several regional seminars in Africa which bring together the French speaking countries of West Africa and the English speaking states of East Africa to talk on their next steps.

In Asia and the Pacific, the Secretariat in Vienna hopes to establish a skills exchange project which is part of the technical cooperation among the Developing Countries Program. In this program,one country with great expertise in certain areas in the aging phenomenon can describe to other Asian nations what they have done or how they have reacted to specific problems in hopes there can be some exchange of ideas and information.

In Columbia, a national conference is planned on in-service training and home help service delivery, but this is only partially funded by the UN Trust Fund. The projects in Latin America seem to be somewhat more sophisticated than those planned in Africa. I think that if one can generalize on a regional basis, many of the Latin American countries are more advanced and more sophisticated in their concerns than are some of the African countries.

And finally, an expert group meeting is planned on Traditional Medicinal Plants and Herbs. This is an attempt to bring improved health to the rural areas. These are just some of the currently funded projects which are

underway as the UN follows through on the World Assembly on Aging.

Conclusion

One final note on an American follow-up. A group of interested people, many of whom attended the world conference, have formed a new United States based non-governmental organization dedicated to following up on the World Assembly with particular emphasis on technical assistance to the Third World. This not-for-profit organization is called the American Association for International Aging and was incorporated in Washington, D.C., in mid-1983. Its primary source of funding will be from multi-national corporations and foundations. The multi-national corporations are those organizations who have outlets in the developing world. It is believed that they will be particularly interested in assisting the third world countries where they are already involved. This will allow the multi-national corporations to become more a part of the community and jointly sponsor technical assistance projects with the American Association for International Aging. The Association is off to a very good start and I think it is a modest way in which at least the non-governmental organization community is impacting on and assisting in third world technical assistance.

United States Response to the World Assembly

William E. Oriol

One of the fascinating aspects of the field of aging, even in 1983, is that those in the field are constantly witnessing modest beginnings, in terms of organization or ideas that begin small but develop into powerful forces within a few years. A comparatively short time ago the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education was a struggling newcomer that could hold its annual meeting in one small room. Now AGHE needs entire hotels and months of planning to prepare for its annual conference. Similarly, the Older Women's League had modest beginnings. The League took shape at a meeting before the 1982 White House Conference on Aging and now has over 7,000 members in more than 40 states. Small beginnings can gain momentum along the way.

Having said that, I should also tell you that I felt somewhat let down by what has *not* happened in the United States and elsewhere after the World Assembly on Aging. This Follow-up Conference is one of a relatively few activities that have taken place since 1982. Abraham Monk at Columbia University did contribute prior to the World Assembly by hosting a conference dedicated to international aging. Since the World Assembly, there have been individual events at the Western Gerontological Society and the Gerontological Society of America, which were useful and timely.

But for the most part, the Assembly stirred little attention in the United States, especially in the press. Perhaps it was asking too much to ask the news media to heed what I describe as a "slow-motion crisis" that will have its most noteworthy impact almost 50 years in the future. But the aging of world population is, I submit, a fascinating story worthy of attention by journalists, by the Congress of the United States, and certainly by the Executive Branch. Perhaps, momentum may now be slowly gathering despite the initial lull.

An organization called the U.S. Committee on World Aging has been formed. This is the current name of a group of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) which began meeting prior to the World Assembly. Its members were and continue to be concerned primarily about the need to insure that NGO's are heard from about the need for follow-up to the World Assembly within the United States. One of the Committee on World Aging's priorities was to work with members of the U.S. House and Senate committees on aging and other congressional leaders in order to

encourage passage of a resolution which expressed the interest of the Congress in the development of an official U.S. respnse to the challenges sounded in Vienna. That resolution was adopted. It requested the President:

(1) To encourage the government-wide participation in implementing the recommendations of the World Assembly and planning for the scheduled review in 1985 by the United Nations on the implementation of the IAPA;

(2) To encourage the exchange of information and the promotion of aging among the states, the federal government, international organizations and other nations;

(3) To encourage greater private sector involvement in responding to the concerns of aging; and

(4) To inform developing nations that the United States recognizes aging as an important issue requiring close and sustained attention in national and regional development plans.

This resolution has now been signed into law and is an official expression of support by the United States House and Senate. It is one of the resources that can be used to make certain the World Assembly receives due attention in years to come.

A few other points about World Assembly follow-up:

- The National Council on the Aging provides ancillary support to the NGO group. NCOA recently issued a news release indicating that it has been designated as the North American member of the International Network on Aging organized by the United Nations. The official announcement notes that the network is coordinated by the United Nations Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.
- The American Association on International Aging (AAIA) performs a direct person-to-person assistance on practical matters of special relevance to third world nations.
- Gerontological advocates are tracking preparations for the 1984 World Population Conference to make certain that aging receives due attention at that strategically important event.
- The International Association for Gerontology is preparing for the 1985 International Congress on Aging which will be held in New York City.
- The Gerontological Society of America is exploring training and other technical assistance programs which the GSA may conduct in conjunction with the United Nations Trust Fund on Aging.

United Nations agencies such as the World Health Organization are also busy in aging, and there are encouraging signs of growing interest in the United Kingdom, some parts of Africa, and elsewhere.

More examples could be given, but I think it is clear that small beginnings are underway. If the past history of aging ventures is an accurate indicator, some of these beginnings will take hold, grow, and contribute to the goal we all share, to make the most of all lives in all nations.

Epilogue

Harold L. Sheppard

McDonald's and Oriol's remarks about the UN World Assembly on Aging prompt a few observations on my part, one of them related to the emphasis that must be placed on involving directly elected and appointed governmental officials close to the decision making process affecting policy. Policy-related conferences have little chance of being successful if they do not directly include a heavy representation of decision-makers and key "implementors." Few experts and technicians also perform in these change agent roles. As John McDonald expressed it, "The goal was to stimulate them [the policymakers] sufficiently so when they return home they would initiate the type of action which is necessary to achieve long-term goals." The non-governmental organizations' own session at Vienna helped too, to re-orient many a national delegate.

A major accomplishment in Vienna was a turn-around in the thinking of leaders from the developing countries regarding the saliency of the aging phenomenon within their own countries' scheme of priorities. Before Vienna, many of these countries were more or less oblivious to the demographic realities that pointed to the rapid growth of the 60-plus population within their own borders, and the social and economic consequences of that growth.

While anthropologists are quick to remind us of profound cultural differences, their discipline also includes explorations for what may be universal, and not different. A case in point, reflected in the World Assembly Plan for Action, is the widespread value placed on avoiding, or postponing as long as possible, the institutionalization of the elderly. Even in the face of the effects of urbanization and the shifts in family structure, so also is there a general stress on the continued importance of the family in support for the elderly. The nature of that support may vary between societies, and change over time, but nonetheless the family remains a central keystone in caring for the elderly.

Another critical area of concensus was aimed against the notion that "premature retirement" (my choice of words) is an effective and sensible solution to problems of general unemployment, even though the Plan of Action did not propose legislation against age discrimination in employment.

John McDonald expressed his surprise at what I would call "Scandinavian modesty." Contrary to our stereotypes regarding Denmark, Norway, and Sweden as ideal models of the social service state, the realities of the mid-70's and since then (limited growth, costly resources,

and recessions) are compelling these countries to slow down, freeze or even cut back on a variety of services and pension benefits for their elderly. This does not necessarily mean a permanent end to the striving for improvements in the well-being of the elderly in such societies.

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We hope that this publication on the two major presentations at IECG's conference on the World Assembly on Aging will serve to stimulate continued interest and action at local, national, and international levels in the field of aging. The subject matter, the issues involved, do not – as in some other areas of human behavior – constitute a fad, susceptible to the capricious whims of fashion and "mass culture." What *may* be likely to change has to do, for example, with the changing age structure of the so-called "old" population, and the socio-cultural definition of "when is old." But such changes are a reflection of inescapable facts and trends, not the product of artificially simulated foci of popular opinion.

It is encouraging to learn that the United Nations has established a network on aging among its own component agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization, to work with the permanent agency in the UN Vienna office responsible for following up on the World Assembly recommendations. These inter-agency relationships, however, will mean very little if individuals, private organizations and governments themselves act too slowly in taking bold steps (and even necessary pedestrian ones) toward implementing the Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly of the UN, after the historic 1982 Vienna World Assembly on Aging.